

[W. A. Tinney]

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Folk stuff - Rangelore

Phipps, Woody

Rangelore

Tarrant Co., Dist #7 [102?]

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FC

W.A. Tinney, 75, was born Jan. 8, 1863 11 Mi. N. of Mckinney, in Collin Co., Tex. His parents died when he was four, and an uncle took charge of the farm and child. By the time he was five years old, Tinney could ride a horse good, and went on a trail drive when he was but 11. He became so proficient with training wild horses to carry a man that he was employed in that capacity when he was not driving some herd up some trail. He was employed as foreman on the JC House Ranch in Callahan Co., from 1887 to 1890, when he came to Ft Worth to enter the cattle commission business. He retired from all activity in 1905, and now resides in Jacksboro, Texas. His story:

Well, I reckon I done more trail driving than I done ranching, son. I was driving by the time I was 11. The main reason, I reckon, that I got to work so young, was because my parents died when I was about five years old, and an uncle with a big family took charge of me and dad's farm. I was born on this farm on Jan. 8, 1863, but just as soon's I got to where I could ride a hoss at along about five years old, I worked out in the field or with the herd of cow critters my uncle was gradually building up. Most of the time, though, I'd slip off when

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I could and go with a gang of boys that all had hosses. We'd do most any thing you could think of, and rode calves to boot.

"My uncle Jack kept me as busy as he could, but as I look back at it all now, I see where he encouraged me to stay with hosses as much as I could. In that day and time, about the only field open for a feller was cow punching. He never did have very many head of cow critters, [though?], and I never got to ride herd on many at a time 'til I was about 11.

"You see, there was a relative come up the Little Elm Draw with a herd of cattle from South Texas, and he left the herd to spend the night with us. C.12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 He took me with him the next morning when he went back to the herd and the cow pokes that were still with the cattle. I went to work right then, as a trail driver. We started the herd, drove it along about five miles, then let it drift. It'd drift from three to four miles, then bed down for the night. That was in the high grass days, when a herd'd fatten on the way to market, and that was the reason these were let drift after a drive. I stayed with the herd all the way through Grayson Co., then left at the river. I reckon I was with the herd about 10 days, or two weeks. Anyway, I was paid 50¢ a day for my work, and that was the first dollar I ever made in my life. I was paid in silver dollars, and those things were as big as cart wheels to me. I sure was proud of them, too.

"This was during the heyday for trail drives. You know, the peek was from '68 to '78, but they started in '65, and lasted 'til '95. Not exactly, but close, and a few before '65 and after '95 but not enough of them to [ammount?] to anything. My next drive was for E.R. Robertson, and from Tigertown, a few Mi. N.[?]. of Paris, Texas, to the Western part of Denton CA. I reckon there were 750 head in his 'ER Connected iron. You make it like this: . I was a regular cow poke then, and stood night herd with the rest of them.

"A peculiar thing about this and my first trail drive, was that there wasn't a single stampede. Now, stampedes are a part of trail drives, and were expected at any time by the cow poke on to his job. You [?] have the whole herd bedded down, and not a head to be

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seen above another. The next minute, the whole outfit would be running towards hell as fast as they could make their scared legs 3 move. As far's that's concerned, you're likely to have a stampede anytime you've got a bunch rounded up.

"After getting the ERs spotted in Denton Co., I went back home. I hadn't been there long 'til a neighbor of our's that had gone up into Arkansas, wrote back a letter and asked me to meet him as he was driving a big herd South into Texas. Turner was his name.

"Well, I went up and met it, and we drove it on down into Denton Co., the same as Robertson done, only we settled North and East of Robertson's place. I beat it on home like I done before, but this time, I didn't stay so awful long 'til my feet got to itching for travel, and I lit out for West Texas.

"I went broke on the way, and was riding along on Palo Pinto Co., when I saw some ERs grazing out on the range. I traced their owner down, and it was Jim Robertson, EER.'s bud. Jim told me the country there in Denton county was so wild E.R. got his wind up, sold the cattle to him, and beat it back to the cane brakes. He'd decided the country was over crowded himself, so he'd moved the herd out there to Palo Pinto Co where there was room a-plenty.

"He gave me a job, and I worked his beef 'til that Spring, when he decided to move out to New Mexico. You know, during a roundup, all the other ranches in the country take part at the same time, and all the beef is rounded up into one herd, then cut out to the different owners. Then the different owners do as they want to about branding, selling, trading, and so on.

"The business of branding is bound to be a bit puzzling to some, because they wonder, 'Well, how do they tell how an unbranded critter belongs to?' They way it is, is that a calf will foller it's mammy anywhere, and stay with it even when a man has roped and tied 4 the

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mother cow. They'll even foller a mother cow through a herd when a man's roped it and dragging it through. That way, it's no job a-tall to tell who belongs to.

"There is another thing, though, that caused an awful lot of argument, and some men made good Indians. I mean the trouble them long looping wet ropers caused. All the time, before, during, and after the roundups, these fellers'd always be on the lookout for unbranded dogies. There's always a good many on any range. They either were missed before, or just any number of reasons explain why they still don't carry a brand. The right way to do, was to round them up into the same herd the rest of them went into, then after all the branded cattle had been cut out and the cattle'd all been worked over, then the owners should get together and decide who's to have so many.

"It's like one time when a certain rancher that's got a-plenty today came to me and propositioned me to swing my rope, free and fancy for him. I said, 'By God!, I don't want none of your steeling wages.' That's the way of it, too. Them high salaried cow pokes didn't care what they roped, nor what brand they used. Quite a large number of them ended up half way between a stout limb and the ground with nothing but a rope keeping their feet off the ground. That was what made them good Indians.

"Well, we got started with Jim's herd, I reckon there were around 500 head in the herd. He'd sold off a few since he'd bought. I could go over that same trail again, if you'd give me a hoss, but I can't call the turn on the names of the counties and towns along the route. We took over two months before we got to where he wanted to spot, and we finally spotted the herd about 50 Mi. N. of the White 5 Oaks Mts. The place it'slef was called, 'Peno's Wells.'

"No sooner'd we got the herd al spotted and scattered when a man came through the country with the news that the John Slaughter Ranch was sending a herd out to this part of the country. Well, John Slaughter ran a ranch right next to Jim's ranch, back there in Palo

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Pinto Co. He'd had his cattle rounded up the same time as Jim's, and had had the same idea about moving, but had never talked it around

"When I heard about that herd coming through, I quit Jim. I hated to do it, though, because Jim had an awful good chuck wrangler in Lee. Old Lee was about the best cooky I ever ate after, and he was even paid the same's the top hands were. \$30.00 a month and chuck.

"I reached the Slaughter herd while it was on the old MacKenzie Trail. In fact, it was at the South end of Blanco Canyon where we bedded the herd down on the spot where MacKenzie had the fight with the Indians and lost. All that's history, though, and every kid knows it.

"The next day, we went on through the Blanco and topped the Cap Rock. We veered the herd to the North away from the big arroyo that went on from the Blanco. The reason for that man because of the ever present danger of a stampede, and if the herd ever stampeded towards anything like that arroyo, we stood to lose every head. You see, the ones in the lead would fall over the cliff and be killed, and all those that followed would be killed too.

"Well, sir. The second night out, the worst stampede I ever saw, happened. No body ever knowed what started it. All I knowed was that I was riding night herd, and was singing as I rode along. That's natural for a cow boy to do that to keep the herd 6 quiet. The night was pitch dark, and the first thing I knowed, the herd was up and running toward me as fast as it could come. There I was, right in front of a stampeding herd that wouldn't think nothing of running over me and my hoss too, and on top of all that, I was between the heard and the rim rock of the arroyo. On account of I wasn't but about 50 feet away from the herd when they started, keeping that far away to keep from riding over any of them as I rode around, I had to think right and fast.

"I turned my hoss towards the arroyo, and rode along 'til the leaders caught up with me, then started into turning them. They were so hard to turn, that I was over two hours

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in doing it. Once I got them turned, though, they broke into a mill and run 'til they run themselves down. I often think of what a spot I was in that time. While I know I'd have never done anything else but what I did do, regardless of the danger, I often wonder what'd happened if I'd have had a chance to get from between the herd and that arroyo. You know it's dangerous enough to be out in front of a stampeding herd of crazy cow critters, but to have that arroyo facing you too, that's a stumper for sure.

"After the herd was stopped, all the hands stayed right with it for two days and nights without rest 'til we got it farther away from that arroyo. That was about the only thing worthwhile that happened between there and the spot where we stopped the herd just this side of the New Mexico and Arizona State Line, and just this side of Springerville, Arizona.

"I reckon it was about the second week in December when we spotted that herd and scattered it out on the range Hamil wanted. We had to sleep for about three weeks in the snow before I had a 7 to leave.

"I rode around and done a little work here and there out in West Texas, 'til I finally drifted to Clyde, Texas, where I leased me some land, bought me a few head of cows and hosses, and settled down to do me a little plain and fancy ranching.

"It was while I was on this place that a crew of N.M. cow pokes come through buying cattle to take back, and told me that old Jim had been rustled plum out of his cattle, and in fighting the rustlers, he'd been shot in ambush.

"One night, I'd been galling around, and had been over to Baird to a dance, and when I come home and/ started to put my hoss up, I saw that somebody'd [?] took all my hoss stock off. Well, I knowed old Bill McDonald, captain in the Texas Rangers, was over at Abilene, so I calls him on the phone and told him about it. He said, 'Which way did they go?'

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"I told him that their tracks looked like they headed West. He said, 'You ride over to Buffalo Gap, and I'll meet you there.' It just happened, that their tracks did go by way of Buffalo Gap, and Bill was able to join me there and got right on the trail.

"We traveled that herd right on to just a few miles N. of Maverick, and as it was coming dark, we come to a Spring where they'd watered their hosses. Bill says, he always talked through his nose, you know, he says, 'They're going to camp right over there tonight. Let's take care of our hosses.'

"That meant their backs off because we'd rode them fast and hard a long ways. We took care of them, then Bill says, 'We'll sleep with one eye open, then get up about four in the morning and 8 and take them by surprise.'

"We didn't get much sleep, but we were ready to start at four the next morning. When two are together, one must stay with the hosses while the other scouts the lay of the land. He comes back and says. 'Now, one of us will have to stay with the hosses while the other goes down and starts them up this way.'

"Well, I was young, and figured I could start them but I didn't want to be in on the stopping, so I asked him to let me start them. I went on around them and got up on a rise where I could see them. Pretty soon, they began to getting up and I saw them putting their coffee pot on the fire. I heard one of them say, 'They tell me we're a long ways from the border yet. I reckon we'll have four-five days ride yet before we get them safe.'

"One of them lifted the coffee pot, and I drilled it with my rifle. That sure made a ruckus in the camp, and they fell to running around like chickens with their heads cut off. Not knowing what to do, nor where the shot came from. I felled two or three of them, and the rest made a break for their saddles and hosses. They rode down the canyon towards the place where Bill waited on them. When they got in the right place, he just sorta riz up and helt his rifle on them and told them to 'H'ist 'em, buddies.'

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"They stopped and done as Bill told them, raising their arms high into the air. ["]About that time, a couple of cow pokes from off some ranch there, heard the ruckus and come a-riding over to see what was going on. We sent one of them for the sheriff at Maverick, I cut out my hosses, and we started back towards Abilene with about 400 head of hosses that gang had stole on their way South from Missouri. They'd stole all the way down, and intended 9 to take them on into Mexico where they'd sell them off.

"I don't know now just what was done to them fellers because I was never called as a witness, and didn't even stay in that part of the country for long after that.

"My feet got to itching again, and I took my cattle to Fort Worth, where I sold them. The hosses, I sold to Jim Mackinaw at Gunsight. Jim dealt mostly in hosses and he give me a good price, so I let him have them. I went into the commission business here for a few years, then quit it all.

"About all I do now, is to live with first one kid, then another. I have four children, but stay with my daughter in Jacksboro most of the time. And, just to show you how small the world is, let me tell you what happened there the other week.

"A friend of mine that knowed I'd been in Denton Co. in '84, and had a friend there at the same time, brought the two of us together. Well sir, after we'd talked the thing over, him and me'd broke hosses back there together. That old coot just laughed at me, about how I'd took the second ride all the time, and how rough them hosses got sometimes. You see, the second ride is the worst. He'd ride them the first time they'd ever been rode, and some of them ornery critters'd put up an awful tussle before he topped them off. After they'd had a chance to rest up, they'd come back worse then they were the first time. You take and top off any wild hoss 'til he's tuckered and he's easy, but you let him get a night's rest, and he's a heap sight worse than he is at any other time in his life.